



# Engineering Professionals

## Choose a Challenging Career in the U.S. PHS Commissioned Corps

Refer to the Home Page of the Commissioned Corps of the U. S. Public Health Service at [www.usphs.gov](http://www.usphs.gov) for more information on professional opportunities, student opportunities, agencies served by the U.S. Public Health Service, and their locations. Refer to [www.usphsengineers.org](http://www.usphsengineers.org) for the latest engineer-specific information.

## WHAT IS OUR MISSION?

The Commissioned Corps employs approximately 450 engineer officers trained in specialties ranging from the traditional chemical, electrical, mechanical and civil engineering disciplines to the new biomedical, computer, and environmental specialties. The engineering mission of these officers is to:

- ***Provide sound engineering expertise in the support of specific agency objectives.*** Engineers are employed as Commissioned Officers with agencies inside and outside of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

### DHHS Agencies or Components

***Indian Health Service (IHS)***

***Food and Drug Administration (FDA)***

***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)***

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)

The Office of the Secretary (OS)

### Non-DHHS Agencies

***Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)***

National Park Service (NPS)

***Agencies listed in Bold Italics currently employ a significant number (>40) of CO engineers.***

- ***Use engineering skills to safeguard the public and to research and identify solutions to the many health related problems that face our nation.*** For example USPHS engineers provide a mobile engineering force capable of responding to chemical/bioterrorism threats with knowledge to determine hot-zone boundaries, evaluate damage and threats to infrastructure (such as water and utilities), and the establishment of decontamination facilities. Furthermore USPHS engineers identify, assess, and evaluate the health risks associated with hazardous waste sites, unplanned releases of hazardous substances, environmental contamination or pollution, and help to prevent or reduce further exposure and resultant illnesses.
- ***Remain on the cutting edge of engineering disciplines and technology as we face the health and environmental challenges of the future.*** For instance USPHS engineers provide engineering expertise to the nation and the world on public health concerns and natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, ice storms, and disease outbreaks. Another example would be supporting the enforcement of U.S. regulations requiring safety and effectiveness of all marketed medical devices and electronic products by providing test analyses and evaluations, and by performing quality system audits at both domestic and foreign medical device manufacturing sites. USPHS engineers also conduct research/evaluations focused upon reducing and eliminating worker exposures to occupational safety and health hazards.
- ***Provide assistance directly to the American people in the form of professional consultation and the provision of health related activities.*** USPHS engineers promote public health, and prevent and control the spread of disease through the installation of water treatment/delivery systems and waste collection / treatment / disposal systems for under-served populations, and promotion of appropriate engineering controls to address other health risks. USPHS engineers actively promote research and provide guidance to the public on the design, construction and operation of "Healthy Buildings" and provide facilities management, planning and construction services for health care delivery systems and research complexes.

# WHY SHOULD YOU BECOME A COMMISSIONED CORPS ENGINEER?

## ENGINEERING FOR LIFE

Would you like to really use your education to help people and make a difference? Engineering in the Commissioned Corps has a distinctly human service component. Whether developing a new medical device or reducing human exposure to an environmental pollutant, Commissioned Corps Engineers are working to improve the lives of people at all levels. Listen to some of our engineer's experiences:

*"There's no feeling in the world like the one you get when you serve someone with water and sewer who has either had to wait for several years or has never had running water in their lives. That just doesn't happen anywhere else in the United States."*

- LT James Begeman

*"...I have had the opportunity to work in Alaska, Arizona, California, Tennessee, Georgia, and New Mexico. PHS paid for me to go to night school to earn my Masters of Civil Engineering. PHS sent me to review courses so I could take the P.E exam with confidence, and it has given me hundreds of hours in continuing education. I have experience in construction engineering, design engineering, project engineering and engineering administration. I have supervised projects with budgets in the millions and I have served individual homes with water and sewer services. I have done arctic engineering, environmental remediation, water resource engineering, wastewater treatment projects, and water treatment and storage projects on all scales. I have built roads in the arctic and friendships with colleagues across the Nation..."*

- LCDR Nathan Tatum

*"Working within IHS SFC allows one to provide a service to people who are truly in need of assistance, and affords an opportunity to work on challenging projects which are rarely found in other sectors of employment. Whether it be trying to find a way to move 200,000 cubic yards of earth in a remote Alaskan Native village, designing and installing an individual well and septic system for an Indian homeowner, or participating on an emergency response team after a natural disaster, our customers always benefit directly from our individual skills and motivations."*

- LCDR Brad Harris

*"My first assignment as an engineer officer in the Public Health Service (PHS) is at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in Atlanta, GA. ATSDR is responsible for evaluating the public health implications of unplanned releases of hazardous substances...Our strike team provides time-sensitive responses to the Environmental Protection Agency requests concerning human exposures to hazardous substances at a public meeting. As a Strike team member, one of my assignments was to assess the health impact of several families that consumed contaminated water from private wells. This assignment involved reviewing environmental and toxicity data, consulting with a toxicologist, talking with one of our associate Regional representatives in Dallas, and documenting the Agency's response in a health consultation."*

- LT Charles H. Weir

*"I initially joined the PHS as a junior COSTEP in 1992. It was an ideal chance for me to spend the summer working as an intern for the FDA because it allowed me to learn about the missions of both the agency and the commissioned corps. After that experience, I realized that I wanted more than just a career in which I could fulfill my interest in engineering as it relates to medical devices. I also wanted to be an officer in the PHS, and join an elite group of people who have chosen to take on additional responsibility to protect and promote the nation's public health above and beyond the typical 9-5 workdays."*

- LCDR Nicole Wolanski

## **SERVICE TO YOUR COUNTRY**

As an officer in the USPHS, you will hold a Commission from the President and serve our nation as a member of a unique uniformed service led by the Surgeon General dedicated to protecting the health of our citizens. As an Engineer Officer, you will have an opportunity to become an engineering leader and a conscientious professional. Through varied assignments and challenges that foster selfless and honorable individual qualities, combined with a “corporate culture” that demands and supports professional growth, you will have an opportunity to be your best, while in proud service to your Nation.

## **BENEFITS**

- 30 days paid annual leave earned yearly, 2.5 days accrued monthly, with the ability to carry over up to 60 days of annual leave from calendar year to calendar year
- Non-contributory base retirement plan options (see additional information below)
- Generous compensation tailored to the actual cost of living with guaranteed longevity increases (see additional information below)
- Sick leave and maternity leave as medically necessary
- Malpractice coverage under the Federal Tort Claims Act
- Non-contributory healthcare benefits for the active-duty officer
- No-premium family medical coverage with TRICARE and low cost premium TRICARE Dental Program (TDP)
- Low-cost term life insurance (SGLI) for officer and dependents
- Social security coverage
- Ability to maintain residency in another state and other protections as afforded by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief (SSCR) Act
- Department Of Defense (DoD) benefits, such as Space-A travel, use of military commissaries, exchanges, officer's clubs, etc.
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, such as survivor and disability benefits, home loans, burial allowances, GI Bill educational benefits , etc.
- Duty travel and transportation expenses paid by the Federal government;
- Benefits accompany officer when transferring from one agency/program to another or from one position to another within the same agency/program;
- Reimbursement for adoption expenses;

## **RETIREMENT**

Commissioned Corps Officers members become vested for retired pay after completing 20 years of service. Officers who first entered any uniformed service after July 31, 1986, will choose between two retirement plan options, and declare their choices during their 15<sup>th</sup> year of service. Both calculate retired pay using the average of the highest base pay rates the member was entitled to during any 36 months of the officer's career. Under the first option, an officer who retires after completing 20 years active service would receive 50 percent of this average. For each subsequent year of active service, the retired pay multiplier increases by 2.5 percent to a maximum of 75 percent at 30 years of service. Each year after retiring, a member's retired pay is adjusted to match inflation rates (using the Consumer Price Index, CPI). The second option trades a decreased multiplier and lower annual cost of living adjustments for a one time Career Status Bonus of \$30K payable at 15 years of service. In this option, the multiplier used to calculate retired pay ranges range from 40% at 20 years to 75% at 30 years service, and the annual adjustment is equal to CPI minus 1 percentage point. For more information regarding the specifics of the retirement options, see <http://www.usphs.gov/html/retirement.html> and <http://pay2000.dtic.mil/>.

In addition, Congress recently authorized Uniformed Service members' participation in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Initially, for tax year 2002, Corps members can contribute up to 7 percent of basic pay, with increases up to 10 percent by 2005. The limit will disappear altogether in 2006, and total contributions will be subject only to Internal Revenue Code limits. TSP contributions are taken from your pre-taxed earnings and grow tax-free. To learn more about the TSP, see the “Uniformed Services” links at <http://www.tsp.gov/index.html>.

Retired officers and their families are eligible for health care coverage through TRICARE and the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program.

## **COMPENSATION**

The compensation of commissioned officers consists of two elements, basic pay and allowances. The basic pay portion is taxable income while the allowances are usually non-taxable. Special pays are also available.

**Basic Pay** is considered to be the officer's actual salary. It is subject to Federal income tax, Social Security tax (FICA), and in most cases, State income tax. The rate of Basic Pay received is based on the officer's temporary grade and the Base Pay Entry Date (BPED) printed on the officer's call-to-active-duty personnel order. The BPED is usually your call-to-active-duty date; however, it may be adjusted for prior service in other Uniformed Services. The second date that is important to you is the Training and Experience Date (TED). This date appears on your call-to-active-duty personnel order and reflects your credit-able training and experience as it relates to your engineering field and determines your rank and eligibility for promotion. Your initial rate of Basic Pay is determined by your BPED and your rank. Subsequent increases in base pay result from length of service and promotion to the next higher rank.

**Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS)** is a monthly allowance payable to all officers at the same rate regardless of rank/BPED. BAS is non-taxable.

**Basic Allowances for Housing (BAH)** is a monthly allowance payable to all officers stationed within the United States, not occupying government housing. It provides compensation for housing rental, renters insurance, and utilities. The rate is determined by the officer's permanent duty station zip code, grade, and dependency status. BAH is non-taxable.

**Cost of Living Allowance (COLA)** is a monthly allowance paid to officers stationed in high-cost areas out of the Continental United States (OCONUS), including Alaska and Hawaii. It provides purchasing power so the officer can purchase about the same goods and services overseas as in the United States. The rate established is based on the officer's grade, base pay entry date, and the actual number of dependents residing in his or her household. COLA is non-taxable.

**Conus Cola Allowance (CCOLA)** is a monthly allowance payable to certain duty stations that are considered high cost areas within the Continental United States. It provides compensation for variations in non-housing expenditures to adjust to regional cost differences within CONUS. The rate is determined by the officer's permanent duty station zip code, grade, and dependency status. CCOLA is taxable.

**Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA)** is a monthly allowance paid to officers stationed out of the Continental United States (OCONUS), other than Alaska and Hawaii, who live on the local economy. It provides compensation for housing rental plus compensates for utility/recurring maintenance. The monthly amount payable is based on comparing the officer's rent, up to a rental ceiling for the duty location and adds on an allowance for utility/recurring maintenance for that location. The rent cap and utility allowance is determined by grade and dependent status for each location. OHA is non-taxable.

**Dislocation Allowance (DLA)** - An officer is eligible to receive a DLA if he or she relocates his or her household as a result of a Permanent Change of Station (PCS). DLA is a non-taxable allowance that is meant to partially reimburse the officer for expenses incurred in closing out his or her household and establishing a new household.

Go to <http://www.dfas.mil/money/milpay/> to obtain specific information on current base pay rates and any of the above allowances at your desired duty location.

**Engineering and Scientific Career Continuation Pay (ESCCP)** is a special pay for engineer or scientist officers between 3 and 11 years of service who are assigned to positions designated as critical shortage positions. The maximum pay authorized is \$3,000 per year. For engineers, these positions are at locations designated as isolated hardship sites and who execute a contract to serve for at least one year. ESCCP is a pre-paid lump sum and is taxable income.

An example compensation table is provided on the following page highlighting a typical engineer's advancement over a 20-year career. Your individual compensation will vary in accordance with your duty station, dependency status, initial commissioned rank and actual promotions.

Typical CO Engineer Compensation Over a 20 year Career – 2002 Dollars									
GRADE	O2 (LTJG)	O2 (LTJG)	O3 (LT)	O3 (LT)	O4 (LCDR)	O4 (LCDR)	O5 (CDR)	O5 (CDR)	O6 (CAPT)
DUTY STATION	Arcata, CA	Martin, SD	Martin, SD	Portland, OR	Portland, OR	Rockville, MD	Rockville, MD	Winchester, MA	Winchester, MA
YEARS IN	2	3	4	6	8	12	13	16	20
BASIC PAY/mo	\$ 2,416.20	\$ 3,169.50	\$ 3,698.70	\$ 3,875.70	\$ 4,395.90	\$ 4,696.20	\$ 5,073.30	\$ 5,755.80	\$6,948.30
* BAS/mo	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37	\$ 166.37
* BAH/mo	\$ 667.00	\$ 635.00	\$ 711.00	<b>\$ 1,058.00</b>	<b>\$1,219.00</b>	<b>\$2,020.00</b>	<b>\$2,150.00</b>	<b>\$2,367.00</b>	<b>\$2,386.00</b>
CCOLA/mo	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$42.00	\$46.00
Total Monthly	\$ 3,249.57	\$ 3,970.87	\$ 4,576.07	\$ 5,100.07	\$ 5,781.27	\$ 6,882.57	\$ 7,389.67	\$ 8,331.17	\$9, 546.67
Annual ESCCP	\$-	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$-
<b>ANNUAL SALARY</b>	<b>\$38,995</b>	<b>\$50,650</b>	<b>\$57,913</b>	<b>\$61,201</b>	<b>\$69,375</b>	<b>\$82,591</b>	<b>\$88,676</b>	<b>\$99,974</b>	<b>\$114,560</b>

**Notes:**

1. Assumes commissioned as an O2 upon entry into service.
2. Assumes receipt of temporary promotions when eligible.
3. BAH in bold italics is at the with dependents rate.
4. Wages listed are from January 2002 uniformed services pay and allowance charts.
5. \* Indicates non-taxable portion of compensation.

## HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Access our Web page and apply online at: [www.usphs.gov](http://www.usphs.gov). If you have difficulty with the online form, please call 800 279-1605. In addition, start looking at current vacancies listed on the website, and call the contact information provided for the specific job you are interested in. Commissioning and placement of officers is a two-track process.

## WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?